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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to measure and compare the perceptions of teachers and principals regarding the likelihood that increased work effort would lead to increased receipt of outcomes, and to determine which actions by principals were perceived by teachers to be motivational. Participants consisted of teachers (n=230) and principals (n=6) in six public schools in Mississippi that had been named National Exemplary Schools and teachers (N=382) and principals (N=12) of 12 other accredited public schools in Mississippi. A survey instrument and interviews were utilized to measure teacher levels of 10 valued outcomes: achievement, advancement, affiliation, autonomy, creativity, influence, material gain, recognition, safety, and service. Responses were compared between the two teacher groups and between teachers and principals. Results suggest that in some respects, such as the importance of motivators, the teachers and principals in the exemplary schools are similar to the teachers and principals in other schools. In areas such as expectancy, the two groups appear to be quite different. Analysis of interview data yielded the information that specific principal actions were considered to be motivational by teachers. These actions by principals effectively address the articulation of the school vision, team building, and affiliation; and they encourage, promote, recognize, and reward exemplary work effort. (LL)

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Expectancy, Teacher Motivation, and Exemplary Schools

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Expectancy, Teacher Motivation, and Exemplary Schools

The primary purpose of this study was to measure and compare the perceptions of teachers and principals regarding the importance, present receipt, and expectancy of ten outcomes believed to be motivational for teachers. Expectancy was defined as the likelihood that increased work effort would lead to the increased receipt of outcomes. The study groups consisted of the teachers (n=230) and principals (n=6) in six Mississippi public schools that had been named National Exemplary Schools by the U.S. Department of Education and the teachers (n=382) and principals (n=12) of twelve other accredited public schools in Mississippi. The secondary purpose of the study was to determine which actions by principals were perceived by teachers to be motivational. Research in the areas of work motivation, teacher satisfaction, and school climate, with particular emphasis on the studies of Vroom (1964); Sergiovanni (1967); Sergiovanni and Starratt (1979); Bass (1985); Campbell, Dunnette, Lawler and Weick (1970); Herzberg (1966); Chen (1984); Lightfoot (1983); Goodlad (1984); Lawler (1973); and Selove (1984) formed the theoretical and research base for this study.

To obtain data, a survey (the Inventory of Motivational Outcomes and Expectancies) was developed based on Vroom's (1964) Valence-Instrumentality-Expectancy theory. The instrument was field tested by teachers in four different school districts and proports to measure teacher levels of the importance, present receipt, and expectancy, of ten motivators (valued outcomes) identified in a review of the literature in the area of work motivation. These motivators were: Achievement,

Advancement, Affiliation, Autonomy, Creativity, Influence, Material Gain, Recognition, Safety, and Service. In addition, interviews were conducted with principals and a random selection of teachers from the schools in the study.

The population of this study consisted of the teachers and principals of six of the seven Mississippi public schools which had been named National Exemplary Schools by the U.S. Department of Education during the school years 1986-87 through 1989-90 and the teachers and principals of a randomly selected group of Mississippi public schools, matched with an exemplary school on the variables of school type (elementary, middle/junior high, high school), school size, socio-economic status, and total instructional funds per pupil. From this sample of eighteen schools, 612 teachers and 18 principals participated in the study. To anaylze data, a t test was utilized to compare teacher responses between the two teacher groups, and a Mann-Whitney U test, as described by Kenny (1987), was used to compare teacher to principal responses within the two study groups. Alpha was set at .05. Content analysis, including categories of specific responses, was used to analyze teacher and principal interview responses.

Findings

The major findings of this study were: (1) Teachers in both groups perceived all outcomes to be relatively important; (2) Exemplary school teachers perceived their present receipt of all outcomes except Material Gain, and their expectancy of all outcomes at significantly higher levels than did the other school teachers; (3) Principals in both groups agreed

with their teachers on the importance of a majority of the outcomes; and (4) Other school teachers perceived their present receipt of Advancement, Creativity, Influence, and Recognition and their expectancy of Advancement and Recognition to be at significantly lower levels than did their principals.

The major findings of this investigation concerning specific principal actions that were considered to be motivational by teachers and/or principals as revealed through analysis of the interview data were:

1. The exemplary schools appeared to be characterized by principal actions that were perceived by the teachers to lead to higher levels of teacher Affiliation, Autonomy, Influence, Recognition, and Safety. It is noteworthy that repairs to facilities and student discipline, two areas which can be considered hygience-factors, were often mentioned by teachers in the other accredited school group, but, with the exception of enhanced teacher work areas, were not mentioned by any teachers in the exemplary school group. With regard to material gain, the exemplary school principals were perceived by their teachers as taking actions that provided additional money for instructional materials, curriculum development, classroom supplies and opportunities for professional growth.

2. Both principal groups felt that they took actions and provided environments that motivated their teachers. However, with the exception of Recognition, the exemplary school principals consistently provided many more examples of actions that they felt were motivational for their teachers. Exemplary school teachers also provided many more examples of actions by their principals than did the teachers in the other schools. It should by noted that repairs to facilities and student discipline, two

areas which can be considered hygiene-factors, were more often cited by the principals in the other accredited schools.

Discussion and Conclusions

The results of this investigation seem to indicate that in some respects, such as the importance of motivators, the teachers and principals in the exemplary schools are rather similar to the teachers and principals in the other schools. In other areas, such as expectancy, the two groups appear to be quite different. These apparent similarities and differences can best be viewed through a comparison of teacher and principal responses to questionnaire items addressing the importance, present receipt, and expectancy of motivators. The differences between school groups can also be seen when consideration is given to the major themes presented in the analysis of the teacher and principal interviews.

Although some statistical differences were noted between the two groups of teachers, it appears that in practice, teachers in both groups consider all ten of the outcomes as measured by the IMOE to be relatively important motivators. This is apparent when one considers that the mean scores for importance on all outcomes from both teacher groups on the IMOE were above five on a seven point scale. Similarly, the principals of both groups statistically agree with their teachers on the importance of a majority of the outcomes. It was also observed that Material Gain, an outcome highly touted by the proponents of merit pay for teachers, was perceived by teachers in both groups to be of relatively low importance (although the mean from both teacher groups was above five) when compared to the means of other outcomes. Teachers in both groups rated Achievement,

Affiliation, Autonomy, Creativity, Safety, and Service higher than Material Gain in relative importance. This tends to support the findings of Mitchell and Peters (1988) and of Anderson and Iwanicki (1984). The fact that Achievement had the highest importance rating from both teacher groups appears to lend support to the findings of Herzberg (1966) and of Sergiovanni (1967).

With regard to the perceived present receipt of outcomes, the statistical differences between teacher groups should be considered. With the exception of Material Gain, the exemplary school teachers perceived their receipt of outcomes to be greater at significantly higher levels than did the teachers in the other schools. The exception of Material Gain may be attributed to the fact that, at present, there is relatively little difference in teachers salaries between Mississippi public school districts. Although not related to Material Gain as defined by the IMOE, analysis of the teacher interviews reveals that teachers in the exemplary schools did cite as motivational principal actions that led to increased resources for instructional materials, curriculum development, classroom supplies, and opportunities for professional growth. This finding tends to support the work of Wright (1984) with regard to motivational incentives for teachers.

The differences between the two teacher groups on their perceived present receipt of the nine other outcomes could be attributed in large measure to the exemplary school teacher perceptions that their school environments are conducive to the receipt of these outcomes and their perceptions that their principals take actions which encourage, promote,

recognize, and reward exemplary work effort. Another particularly interesting finding was that there were no significant differences with regard to present receipt between the principals and the teachers in the exemplary schools. This would tend to indicate that the exemplary school principals are very much aware of their teachers' present work conditions. This awareness can be attributed to high levels of principal visibilitiy in the classrooms, accessibility to teachers, and the result of principal actions that are perceived by teachers to encourage affiliation, trust, and open communication.

In contrast, the other school principals statistically rated teacher receipt for five outcomes (Advancement, Creativity, Influence, Recognition, and Safety) higher than did their teachers. These differences would tend to indicate that the other school principals perceive what is going on in their schools with regard to teacher receipt of outcomes differently than do their teachers. This may be attributed to less principal visibility in the classrooms, less accessibility to teachers, or more attention to hygiene-factors, such as facilities and student discipline, rather than actions which promote affiliation, trust, or open communication.

While the principals of the other schools cited many actions which they believed encouraged teacher recognition, the findings do not indicate that these actions are perceived by teachers in the other schools to be highly motivational. This too, indicates a perceptual difference between the teachers and the principals of the other schools.

In the area of expectancy, the exemplary school teachers perceived their expectancy of all ten outcomes to be greater at significantly higher levels than did the teachers in the other schools. This too, may be

attributed in large measure to the perceptions of the exemplary school teachers that their school environments are conducive to the continued and increased receipt of these outcomes and their perceptions that their principals take actions which encourage, promote, recognize, and reward exemplary work effort. A shared vision of the school and shared school goals, two items which were consistently mentioned by exemplary school teachers in the interviews, could also in part account for these relatively high levels of expectancy.

There were no significant differences with regard to expectancy between the principals and the teachers in the exemplary schools. This would tend to indicate that the exemplary school principals are very much in agreement with their teachers regarding the perceived results of continued exemplary work effort. This too, can be attributed to a shared and articulated vision, shared school goals, high levels of principal visibility in the classrooms, accessibility to teachers, and the result of principal actions that are perceived by teachers to encourage affiliation, trust, and open communication.

In contrast, the other school principals statistically rated teacher expectancy for three outcomes (Advancement, Autonomy, and Recognition) higher than did their teachers. These differences indicate that the other school principals perceive the expectancy levels of at least these three outcomes differently than do their teachers. This too, could be attributed to less principal visibility in the classrooms and less accessibility to teachers. These differences may also be the result of fewer actions by the other school principals which are perceived by their teachers to encourage

increased work effort or teacher autonomy. An interesting observation, consistent throughout the interviews, was that neither the principals nor the teachers in the other schools referred to an articulated school vision or shared school goals in the interviews. The absence of these items may also contribute to the lower expectancies in the other schools.

In comparison to the other accredited schools in this study, the exemplary schools appear to be characterized by an environment which much more closely encompasses the five correlates of the effective school research (Edmonds, 1979). This is particularly evident and supported by the interview data in the areas of strong principal leadership and a clearly articulated shared vision and school goals. The exemplary school principals are perceived by their teachers as leaders who take specific actions that promote and encourage the increased receipt and expectancy of the valued outcomes addressed in this study. While both groups of schools are going about the business of educating children, it is apparent that the teachers and principals of the exemplary schools are operating in an environment that includes higher levels of schoolwide vision, shared values, professional and personal affiliation, a sense of community, autonomy, shared decision-making, and recognition. The sense of purpose and excitement experienced by the researcher in the exemplary schools may, in large measure, be generated by principal actions that effectively address the articulation of the school vision, team building, affiliation, and their accessibility to teachers, along with actions which are perceived by their teachers to encourage, promote, recognize, and reward exemplary work effort.

The other accredited schools, although effective by state accreditation standards, were not characterized by this same sense of purpose or level of excitement. This difference may, in part, be attributed to differences between the perceptions of the teachers and principals of the other schools with regard to the receipt and expectancy of the valued outcomes addressed in this study. Another contributing factor to this difference between school groups may be the lack of emphasis by principals and, to some extent, teachers in the other schools to a shared vision of the school and shared values, as well as the apparent increased emphasis on such hygiene factors as facilities and student discipline.

The results of this study indicate that there are differences in the perceived amount of present receipt and expectancy of outcomes between the two school groups. If, as Hersey and Blanchard (1979) maintain, "it is the perception or interpretation of reality that produces behavior", then school leaders should begin to take actions that increase their understanding of teacher perceptions regarding the importance, receipt, and expectancy of valued motivational outcomes.

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